

EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE TRACKING SYSTEM (EATS)

MAY 2002

Background

DWD is working with Deloitte staff and local agency representatives to develop and implement an internet-based system to verify and track receipt of Emergency Assistance (EA). This project began in 2001, when several agencies requested that DWD address the need to track receipt of EA. Many agencies noted that the increase in EA cases, as a result of the addition of impending homelessness as a criteria for eligibility, made it especially difficult to verify whether someone had received EA in the previous 36 or 12 months.

In May 2001, Contract and Implementation (C&I) Committee members requested that DWD present options for tracking. At the August 2001 meeting, Stephen Dow presented a paper on creating an internet-based EA tracking system. Committee members supported the idea and provided staff names to participate in the project workgroup. The project was approved at a November DWS Workflow meeting. DWD EA policy analysts held initial planning meetings in January, and the full workgroup meetings began in February.

Project development

The workgroup included the following participants:

- DWD staff: policy analysts, CARES analysts, training staff, Call Center staff
- Deloitte analysts and projects managers
- Local agency representatives from Racine County, Forward Service Corporation, YW-Works, and Red Cross Milwaukee

A series of three design meetings covered the following:

- System requirements – eligibility, data needed, related policy issues, functions
- Administrative structure and security
- Contract issues
- Reporting requirements – agency and state data needs
- Conversion issues

A number of smaller group meetings covered issues such as training, technical assistance, and conversion. Deloitte presented a demo of the system on May 13, and everyone present was impressed by the system, particularly the ease of use.

The system, called the Emergency Assistance Tracking System or EATS, will collect information on EA cases, including the caretaker relative(s) name, date of birth, social security number, reason for receipt of EA, date of receipt and children in the EA group. The system will have two primary functions: verifying receipt of EA for new cases, and tracking receipt of EA. The system will not track denials; only recipients receiving benefits will be tracked.

EATS will provide an excellent tool to assist agencies in administering EA. In addition to allowing for statewide verification and tracking, both agencies and DWD will be able to produce reports. For the first time, we will be able to produce an accurate count of EA recipients, as well as the reasons for receipt of EA.

Timeline

EATS will be available and ready for use by agencies on October 1, 2002. DWD trainers will provide training to agency leads and EA staff (up to 2 from each agency) in September 2002. Agency leads and EA staff will have two weeks prior to system production to train other staff in their local agency.

Conversion

In order to populate the system for agencies to verify receipt of EA, DWD will need assistance from W-2 agencies throughout the state. In June, DWD central office staff will work with regional office staff to facilitate this process by sending a pre-formatted spreadsheet or database application to all agencies. Agencies will then enter information for their EA recipients (from October 1999 through the present) into the spreadsheet/database. DWD will provide detailed information on this process, and will explain how existing databases may be converted. Agencies will have approximately two months to enter their data into the spreadsheet and return it to DWD.

Next steps

- DWD EA policy analysts and Call Center representatives will continue the process of providing updates on the system at the W-2 regional manager meetings in all areas of the state.
- DWD staff will provide a demo of the system at the WSSA conference.
- DWD will release an ops memo to give an overview of the system and information on training sessions.
- DWD will work with local agencies in June and July to obtain information on all EA cases from October 1999 through current.